

# Comment Sheet for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Red River Valley Water Supply Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released on December 30, 2005. As part of the public review process, comments on the report should be sent to Red River Valley Water Supply Project, Dakotas Area Office, Bureau of Reclamation, P.O. Box 1017, Bismarck, N.D., 58502-1017. Comments should be postmarked by Tuesday, February 28, 2006.

(Please Print Clearly)

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**Comments:**

I've enclosed a typed version of my comments

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\*Attach additional sheets if necessary

Please mail your comments to the address on the back of this form, or FAX your comments to 701-250-4326, or e-mail your comments to [ssnortland@gp.usbr.gov](mailto:ssnortland@gp.usbr.gov). Thank you.

The names and comments of those making written or oral statements on this process will become part of a public record. You may request that your name and/or address be withheld from public release. Those requests will be honored to the extent permissible by law.

As a business owner, a landscape architecture student of NDSU, and citizen of Fargo, I am pleased to hear that our leaders have the vision and foresight to plan for our long-term water supply. Only shortsighted individuals could think that we will never experience another serious drought in the Red River Valley like we did in the 1930's.

However, I am concerned that the Red River Water Supply Project has neglected to consider a possible solution to our forecasted water shortage. The seven alternatives examined seem to be based on the premise that we don't have enough potential surface water to supply our water needs. So all seven options considered primarily rely on piping in water from other sources, such as the Missouri River or Lake of the Woods, or tapping into groundwater resources. The preferred option pipes water from Lake Sakakawea to the Sheyenne River.

This option is appealing because the water storage capacity is already present in Lake Sakakawea. However, it has several problems associated with it. The first and historically most important problem is the risk of biota transfer from the Missouri River Basin to the Hudson Bay Basin. While the option has proposed a biota treatment plant that is supposed to eliminate any risk of transferring organisms, it is very difficult to believe that this plant can run at 100% effectiveness over the course of several decades. One engineering failure, one human error, one incorrect assumption or one mechanical failure and the Hudson Bay Basin has new organisms.

More significant to me though is the limited utility that will be gained from this option. The estimated cost is about \$660 million dollars, and this will come from the pockets of the taxpayers. And for that enormous financial outlay all that we get is a pipeline that may be inactive and unused for decades at a time. Yes, it is good to invest

large sums of money to insure that we have a stable water supply, but it seems like we should be able to get a better return for our dollar. We should build infrastructure that has purpose in wet years, normal years and dry years.

Another problem with this solution is that the Red River Valley becomes dependent on water from another region. All last year we heard how the water level of Lake Sakakawea was reaching record lows. Even though the proposed solution will only lower the lake level another inch or two, how can we be sure that the water will be there when we need it? The regions west of the Red River Valley get less annual rainfall than we do. Do we really want to get involved in the water politics of the Missouri River? Do we really want to depend on another region to supply our water?

The Red River Basin does not lack water. This is evident in that we have moderate to severe flooding forecasted this spring and I will be sandbagging tomorrow morning. What we lack is adequate water retention and storage facilities.

What I propose is an in-basin water supply system that would focus on increasing water storage in the Valley instead of piping in water from another region. Several such reservoirs already exist. Examples of these include Lake Traverse, Lake Ashtabula and the Casselton Reservoir.

However, these new reservoirs should be built on marginal farmland that is already flood prone. So instead of building two or three large reservoirs that inundate large tracts of prime farmland, we would build several dozen smaller reservoirs that don't disrupt prime farmland. Such a system of reservoirs would rely on the natural drainage of the valley to deliver the water to its users, eliminating the need to pipe water to its destination. Our streams and rivers would carry the water to us.

This solution has advantages in wet years, normal years and dry years. In wet years, the system would be able to reduce peak flooding. Instead of rushing the water downstream, we would be able to contain some of the water in the reservoirs until the flooding subsided. This would also reduce the need for communities to build massive flood control systems.

In normal years it would provide recreational opportunities in the Red River Valley. Right now a large segment of the population of Fargo goes to the lakes region of Minnesota every weekend. If we had reservoirs in the valley they would become the destination for some of these weekend excursions. This would also be of great economic benefit to the region and keep more money in North Dakota.

In dry years the water would be able to be released from the reservoirs to supply cities with the necessary water. An additional advantage to this solution is that it could be built incrementally as the demand for water grows. This would also spread the financial outlay over several years making it easier for cities to invest in their water supply than proposed solution.

Additionally, this solution eliminates any risk of biota transfer from another basin. It also keeps our water supply in the Red River Valley and independent of the water politics of neighboring regions. And finally, it has public utility in wet years, normal years and in dry years whereas the proposed solution does not.

I ask that the Red River Water Supply Project withdraw their proposed solution and study in-basin alternatives that would focus on increase water storage in the Red River Valley. If we store up water in the years of plenty like Joseph stored up grain in

Egypt, we will supply ample water in the years of drought just like he supplied grain to the whole region in the severe famine of his day.